

Residential Ratepayers Advisory Board Meeting Minutes

The Residential Ratepayers Advisory Board (“Board”) met on March 13, 2006, at the OCA offices.

Present for the Board were:

Lawrence Kelly, Chair
Claira Monier
Richard L. Russman
Ken Mailloux
Louis Pare
Gloria Seldon

Present for the OCA were:

F. Anne Ross, Consumer Advocate
Kenneth Traum, Assistant Consumer Advocate
Steve Merrill, Utility Analyst
Christina Martin, Legal Assistant

Mr. Kelly declared a quorum and opened the meeting at 2:07 pm.

1. Minutes

Mr. Kelly motioned to approve the Board Minutes of the February 6th meeting. The motion was seconded and approved.

2. Mergers

Anne discussed the two recent mergers being proposed. MacQuarie Bank of Australia has extended an offer to acquire Aquarion Water Company and National Grid has extended an offer to acquire KeySpan. Anne explained that this is a venue for us to try to impose enhanced Quality of Service Standards with a system of automatic fines, improved water quality standards, improved rate projection forecasts, NH employment protections, community involvement, rate freezes or reductions and no recovery of acquisition adjustment. The OCA asked the Board if there were other standards for the OCA to think about. Mr. Russman suggested having conservation be a key topic for new goals as well as a rate tier system. The OCA agreed.

3. OCA Intake Policy

The OCA drafted an in-house policy on what dockets/cases/legislation and activities to become involved in and asked the Board for their input. The Board felt that the OCA should add “effectiveness” to the list of things to consider. Meaning, if the OCA feels a particular activity will take a lot of resources but will inevitably be non-effective because the outcome of the case is predetermined then the OCA should recognize such and draw back.

4. **Legislative Attachment** – no discussion.

5. **Addendum - Dockets with Activity**

The Board next reviewed the active-dockets addendum.

LICAP – Mr. Traum explained the OCA’s position regarding LICAP and the Settlement that was filed on March 6th. Ms. Ross will be speaking to the ISO NE Board on Wednesday and she explained that she will be talking to them regarding how this decision affects consumers. Ms. Ross also plans to ask them to rethink their philosophy and to explain how this regional capacity market will work.

Energy Planning Board – Mr. Traum explained the OCA’s involvement with this Board and will let the Board know when a public forum is to be held for public input on energy matters.

DE 04-072 PSNH – Ms. Ross gave a brief explanation of the docket concerning a least cost plan for PSNH electric generation and how it is progressing.

DE 04-177 PSNH – Mr. Traum advised that the PUC denied PSNH’s Motion for Rehearing and that the Appeal at the Supreme Court is now going to proceed concerning PSNH’s cost of capital.

DE 05-157 CORE – Mr. Traum advised the Board that we are awaiting the PUC’s decision. Ms. Ross explained the legal arguments raised in the OCA’s Testimony. Discussion then ensued regarding the Core Programs and where the money is spent, as well as if the money is spent in the best possible manner. The OCA explained that there is a bill, SB389, concerning a study of the energy efficiency portion of the SBC, as well as a new Study Committee to evaluate the low income portion of the SBC, namely the Low-Income Electric Assistance Program Review Committee.

DE 05-178 Unitil – Mr. Traum explained this is a traditional rate case and will go on for awhile.

Mr. Traum then noted that as of May 1st, Unitil and National Grid customers will see a new energy rate due to contracts expiring and the need to buy energy at the market rates. The OCA asks the Board for some guidance on what we can do for these customers who will be seeing yet another rate increase because of this. Ms. Ross explained that we are looking into aggregation and any help would be appreciated in that venue.

DE 05-111 Power Quality Improvement Pilot Program – Mr. Merrill explained that we are awaiting a notice of Hearing in this docket and two Bedford residents who are participants in this case have both stated that they do not agree with the proposal sent to the Commission.

DE 04-019 Verizon Quality of Service – Ms. Ross & Mr. Merrill gave a summary of

the status of this docket.

its DM 05-172 Investigation into Utility Poles – Mr. Merrill explained this docket and various topics. There was some discussion regarding poles, Verizon and the availability of service crews in rural vs. urban areas within the state.

DW 05-119 Aquarion – Mr. Traum explained this is a rate case but also has some service quality elements that need to be addressed. Ms. Ross mentioned a few telephone calls regarding the care and treatment of the fire hydrants in towns.

DW 05-137 Lakes Region - Mr. Merrill explained that this is a rate case in the early phase of discovery and that early indications are that a settlement is possible

DG 05-080 Northern Utilities – Mr. Traum explained that an additional outcome for the protracted NH/Maine/ Northern negotiations and NH/Northern Settlement. A recent company filing will save small NH customers up to \$400,000 annually.

Winter Cost of Gas Adjustment – Mr. Traum explained that the national cost of natural gas has been going down consistently with this mild winter. The companies have been reflecting this through downward adjustments in this winter's billed cost of gas clause.

Mr. Russman asked what is happening with SB314 bill. Mr. Traum explained the current status. Discussion then turned to the Berlin Paper Mill closing and the possibilities of a Wood Pellet plant to replace same.

Ms. Martin asked the Board if they have all reviewed and taken the survey on the OCA website. Mr. Russman suggested that in the future more of an explanation be given to the public on what the pros and cons of each answer are. Mr. Kelly agreed, stating a balance of education without crossing the boundary of too much information. Ms. Martin then asked the Board to always give us any feedback on our public outreach efforts including the information on the website.

Next Board Meeting

April - The Board scheduled the next meeting for April 3, 2006.

Mr. Kelly adjourned the meeting at 3:45 pm.